



HEA 1637 – Student Athlete Concussions

[HEA 1637](#) adds clarification to the existing Concussion Law (IC 20-34-7). This clarification explains that the Concussion Law applies to all football coaches who coach football to individuals who are less than twenty (20) years of age and who are in grades 1 through 12.

Additional Guidance:

Q: Do all football coaches need to take this certification course?

A: HEA 1637 applies to all football coaches (head coaches and assistant football coaches) who coach children under the age of 20, who coach children in grades 1 through 12, and who utilize public property (parks, schools, public fields) for practice or games. The Indiana Department of Education Concussion Advisory Board recommends that all volunteer football coaches participate in this training as well.

Q: Does this football certification course apply to coaches who practice and play only on private property?

A: No, IC 20-34-7 only applies to football coaches whose teams practice or play on public property. However, if a private football team plays any of its games or practices on public fields during the season, then the football coaches would fall under this law and would need to be certified.

Q: Where can I find a football certification course that meets the requirements of IC 20-34-7?

A: A list of courses that have been approved by the Indiana Department of Education as meeting the requirements of this law can be found at the following website:

<http://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/health/concussions>.

Q: What training is recommended for high school coaches of all other sports (excluding football)?

A: IC 20-34-7 requires that coaches of all other high school interscholastic and intramural sports become educated regarding the signs, symptoms and management of concussion injuries.

Resources regarding such education can be found on the IDOE website at:

<http://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/health/concussions>.

Q: Where can I find a copy of the Concussion Law?

A: The law (enacted July 1, 2012) is titled “Student Athletes: Concussions and Head Injuries”. It is listed under Indiana Code as IC 20-34-7 and can be found at the following site:

<http://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/health/concussions>

Q: Are there sample forms that I could use regarding the implementation of this law?

A: Yes, sample forms can be found on the Indiana Department of Education website at <http://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/health/concussions>. These forms were updated in 2014 to include the new 24 hour minimum waiting period before a student athlete can return to play or practice. Schools are not required to use these forms. If a school has their own forms that meet the requirements of the law, they may continue to use their own forms.

Q: Does this law, in regards to the educational materials and the return to play requirements, apply to all students?

A: No, this law does not apply to all students. The law only applies to students that are in grades 9-12 who participate in an interscholastic or intramural sport.

Q: What is the definition of an interscholastic sport?

A: An interscholastic sport is defined as one that is sanctioned by the Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA). These include the following for boys: baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, soccer, swimming, tennis, track and wrestling; and for girls: basketball, cross country, golf, gymnastics, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, track and volleyball.

Q: What is the definition of an intramural sport?

A: IHSAA states “an intramural contest occurs when all participants on both teams are members of one school”.

Q: With regard to the Concussion Law, what other types of teams could be considered as an intramural sport?

A: Any team, comprised of student athletes in grades 9-12, that is considered a “school-sponsored” team or whose coach is paid, compensated or officially recognized by the school administrator would be considered as an intramural sport.

Q: Is cheerleading considered an interscholastic or intramural sport?

A: Yes. In Indiana, cheerleading is considered an intramural sport, and thus would apply under this law. In addition, cheerleading is recognized as an interscholastic sport at the federal level by the National Federation of High School Sports.

Q: Are club sports considered intramural sports?

A: Club sports would be considered as intramural sports if all the participants of both teams are members of one school, or if the coach of the club sport is paid, compensated or officially recognized by the school administrator.

Q: What about other age students who do not fall under the legal definitions of this law?

A: For a student athlete, of any age or sport, the recommendation would be for the adults in charge to take concussions and head injuries seriously. If a concussion or head injury is suspected for any student, the recommendation would be to remove the student from play, notify the student’s parents and recommend that the student be evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries before allowing the student to return to practice or game play.

Q: When can a student athlete return to play?

A: The law mandates that a high school student athlete, who is suspected of having a concussion, must sit out for at least 24 hours, even with a signed release by a licensed health care provider. A licensed health care provider, if available, can do an initial sideline evaluation of a student athlete and may return the athlete to practice or a game if no concussion is suspected. However, if during this initial assessment a concussion is suspected, the student athlete must be removed from play for at least 24 hours, must be evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries, and must receive a written clearance before returning to play or practice.

Q: Can an athletic trainer do an initial assessment of a student athlete that has had a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body?

A: Yes, if a student athlete has had a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body, the student may be assessed by an athletic trainer, if available. The athletic trainer can make a first assessment of the student athlete at the time of injury. If the student exhibits any of the danger signs associated with a concussion, the student athlete should receive immediate medical attention.

If during this initial assessment, the student athlete does not exhibit any of the danger signs associated with a concussion, but does exhibit any (even one) of the signs or symptoms of a concussion, a concussion should be suspected. At that time, the student athlete should be removed from play, the athlete's parents should be notified, the athlete should not return to play for a minimum of 24 hours, the athlete must be evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries, and a written clearance (such as the "Concussion Evaluation and Release to Play Form for Licensed Health Care Providers") must be completed.

Q: What training is necessary for a licensed health care provider?

A: The law states that the student athlete release to return to play form should be signed by a "licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries". There is no definition in the law of what constitutes a "trained" provider. Thus, it will be up to the individual health care provider to determine if he/she feels qualified or if he/she would rather refer the student to a specialist. Additionally, a parent could request a specialist or a second opinion if they felt this was needed.

Q: Does a student athlete have to lose consciousness for a concussion to be suspected?

A: No, if a student athlete exhibits any of the signs or symptoms listed on the fact sheet, even if it is just one of the symptoms, he/she should be suspected of having a concussion.

Q: What should be done if a student athlete does lose consciousness, even for a brief time, after a blow to the head or body?

A: Losing consciousness is one of the danger signs when a concussion is suspected. A student athlete should receive immediate medical attention if after a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body he/she exhibits any of the danger signs listed on the fact sheet.

Q: Is neurocognitive testing required as a baseline for student athletes?

A: No, neurocognitive testing is not required by law. However, many health care providers trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries recommend that student athletes have this baseline testing at least once before participating in an extracurricular or intramural sport.

Q: Is there other new legislation that will impact student athletes?

A: Yes, IC 20-34-8 is a new law that was passed in 2014 and takes effect July 1, 2015. This new law includes several requirements regarding the education of parents, student athletes and coaches on the signs and symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest. More information, sample forms, and additional guidance regarding this new legislation can be found at the following website:

<http://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/health/sudden-cardiac-arrest>

Q: What should I do if I have further questions regarding the Concussion Law?

A: For more details, please join the Indiana Department of Education's Learning Connection under the community entitled "IDOE – Concussion and Sudden Cardiac Arrest in Student Athletes". You may also contact Jolene Bracale at the Indiana Department of Education. She can be reached at 317-232-0541 or jbracale@doe.in.gov.